181206 - Quoting as evidence for seeking the help of someone other than Allah being permissible the hadeeth, "If one of you gets lost in the wilderness, let him call out, "Help me, O slaves of Allah.'"

the question

The Sufis claim that Imam Ahmad believed in seeking nearness to Allah by virtue of some righteous people (tawassul) and seeking the help of someone other than Allah (istighaathah). Shu'ab al-Eemaan, hadeeth 7697 (vol. 6 p. 128): Abu 'Abdullah al-Haafiz told us: Ahmad ibn Salmaan, the faqeeh in Baghdad, told us: 'Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal told us: I heard my father say: I did Hajj five times, twice riding and three times walking, or three times riding and twice walking. I lost my way during one Hajj and I was walking, so I began to call out: O slaves of Allah, show me the way. I kept doing that until I found the road – or words to that effect. They support what they attribute to Imam Ahmad with a another report in Shu'ab al-Eemaan: And it was narrated from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has angels other than the recording angels who write down how many leaves fall from the trees. If one of you gets lost in the wilderness, let him call out, 'Help me, O slaves of Allah, may Allah have mercy on you.'" Narrated by al-Bazzaar via Haatim ibn Ismaa'eel, from Usaamah ibn Zayd: Abaan ibn Saalih told me, from Mujaahid, from Ibn 'Abbaas.

Based on this, it is mustahabb to seek to draw close to Allah (tawassul) by virtue of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in du'aa', according to the view of Imam Ahmad. I hope you can respond as soon as possible.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Al-Bazzaar (4922) narrated via Usaamah ibn Zayd al-Laythi, from Abaan ibn Saalih, from Mujaahid, from Ibn ‘Abbaas, in a marfoo‘ report: “Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has angels on earth other than the recording angels who write down how many leaves fall from the trees. If one of you gets lost in the wilderness, let him call out, ‘Help me, O slaves of Allah.’”

Al-Bazzaar said:

We do not know of these words being narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in this wording except this version with this isnaad.

End quote from Musnad al-Bazzaar (11/181)

There are two problems with this hadeeth:

1.It is based on the narration of Usaamah ibn Zayd al-Laythi

He is one of the narrators concerning whom the scholars of al-jarh wa at-ta‘deel (evaluation of hadeeth narrators) differed. Some of them regarded him as thiqah (trustworthy), and others regarded him as da‘eef (weak). Whatever the case, there is some doubt about his memory and precision.

Imam Ahmad said: If you examine the hadeeth he narrated, you will find some oddness in it.

End quote from al-Kaamil fi Du‘afa’ ar-Rijaal (2/76)

Al-Haafiz adh-Dhahabi said concerning him:

He is sadooq (honest) but sometimes gets confused. The view of Yahya al-Qattaan differed

concerning him. Ahmad said: He is nothing. An-Nasaa'i said: He is not qawiy (strong). Ibn 'Adiyy said: There is nothing wrong with him.

End quote from al-Mughni fi ad-Du'afa' (1/66)

Similarly, al-Haafiz said concerning him in at-Taqreeb: He is (honest) but sometimes gets confused.

End quote from Taqreeb at-Tahdheeb (p. 98)

2.Those who narrated it from Usaamah ibn Zayd differed about how he narrated this hadeeth. Some of them narrated it from him in a marfoo ' report, as the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and some narrated it in a mawqoof report as the words of Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him).

The only one who narrated it as a marfoo' report was Haatim ibn Ismaa'eel. His report was narrated by al-Bazzaar in his Musnad (4922).

Four narrators differed from him. They are:

1.'Abdullah ibn Farookh. His report was narrated by al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Eemaan (1/325)

2.Rawh ibn 'Ubaadah. His report was narrated by al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Eemaan (10/140)

3.Ja'far ibn 'Awn. His report was narrated by al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Eemaan (10/140)

4.Abu Khaalid al-Ahmar. His report was narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in al-Musannaf (6/91)

All of them narrated from Usaamah ibn Zayd al-Laythi, and regarded it as the words of Ibn 'Abbaas.

Undoubtedly the mawqoof report (with an isnaad going back to the Sahaabi – Ibn Abbaas – and not

the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – is more likely to be sound, because the number of its narrators is greater and they are more precise, so they are less likely to have made mistakes and get confused.

Imam ash-Shaafa‘i said: If there are several narrators (whose reports concur), it is more likely to be transmitted correctly than if there is only one narrator.

End quote from Ikhtilaaf al-Hadeeth , p. 177

Al-Haafiz Shams ad-Deen adh-Dhahabi said: If a hadeeth is narrated by a trustworthy narrator with an isnaad, and he narrated it as a mawqoof or mursal report, but a number of his trustworthy peers differed from him, then what counts is that on which those trustworthy narrators are agreed, because a single narrator may make mistakes. In this case there is a clear mistake with no way to explain it, and what matters is what the majority agree on.

al-Mooqazah p. 52

What is more likely to be the case with this hadeeth – if we determine that it is acceptable – is that it is the words of Ibn ‘Abbaas, and not the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Al-Bayhaqi said: This is mawqoof (and its isnaad ends with) Ibn ‘Abbaas, and it has been applied by some righteous people, and they found it to be true from experience.

End quote from al-Adaab, p. 269

Among those who acted upon this hadeeth was Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

‘Abdullah the son of Imam Ahmad said: I heard my father say: I heard my father say: I did Hajj five times, twice riding and three times walking, or twice walking and three times riding. I lost my way during one Hajj and I was walking, so I began to call out: O slaves of Allah, show me the way. I

kept doing that until I found the road.

End quote from Masaa'il al-Imam Ahmad Riwaayat Ibnihi 'Abdullah (p. 245). See also: Tareekh Dimashq by Ibn 'Asaakir (5/298).

Secondly:

One of the important matters to which attention must be paid is that the guideline on the kind of seeking help that constitutes shirk is "asking of anyone other than Allah for that which no one can do except Allah."

As for seeking help from other created beings in matters that they are able to do, that has nothing to do with shirk at all.

The report mentioned states that there is a type of angels, who are alive, in the sense of a life that is natural and appropriate for them. Allah has put them on earth to help those who are lost and guide them to the correct route, so whoever asks them for help is asking for help from a created being regarding something that he is able to do, and Allah has created him for this role.

There is a great difference between this and asking a created being who is dead or absent to heal his sick loved one, or to bless him with a child, or to make childbirth easy for his wife, or to have mercy on him and forgive him, and other things that no one can do except Allah.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

Istighaathah means seeking ghawth (help) which is removal of hardship. A created being may be asked for help with regard to matters that he is able to help with, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"but if they seek your help in religion, it is your duty to help them"

[al-Anfaal 8:72]

“The man of his (own) party asked him for help against his foe”

[al-Qasas 28:15]

“Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety)”

[al-Maa’idah 5:2].

But with regard to that which no one can do except Allah, it should only be sought from Allah. End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (1/103).

And he said:

As for that which no one can do except Allah, may He be exalted, it is not permissible to seek it from anyone except Allah, may He be glorified; it should not be sought from the angels or the Prophets or anyone else, and it is not permissible to say to anyone other than Allah “Forgive me” or “Give us rain” or “Grant us victory over the disbelieving people” or “Guide our hearts” and so on. … As for that which humans are able to do, that does not come under this heading.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (1/329)

And he said:

The Sunnah is that the living person may be asked to offer du‘aa’ (supplication), just as he may be asked for anything else that he is able to do. As for created beings who are absent or dead, they are not to be asked for anything.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (1/344)

And he said:

Things that no one is able to do except Allah are not to be sought from anyone else, such as sending down rain, causing crops to grow, relief of distress, guidance away from the wrong paths, and forgiveness of sins. No one in creation is able to do these things; no one is able to do them except Allah.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (1/370)

We have quoted a great deal from Shaykh al-Islam about this point because there is a great deal of confusion about it among those who follow whims and desires and innovations (bid‘ah), who seek to confuse others also.

Shaykh Saalih Aal ash-Shaykh said: The hadeeth does not support the claim of the followers of falsehood, that one may ask of the dead and others. Rather it clearly states that those who are addressed by the one who has lost his way are the angels, who can hear what he says to them and are able to respond by their Lord’s leave, because they are alive and have been given the ability to help the one who is lost find his way. They are the ones who are addressed as slaves of Allah; they are alive and can hear, and can respond by doing what their Lord enables them to do, which is to help the one who is lost in the wilderness find his way. Whoever quotes these reports as meaning that one may call upon a specific person by name is telling lies against the Messenger of Allah, and he has not paid attention to and contemplated the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and that is characteristic of those who follow whims and desires.

Once this is clear, we may say that this report contains words that may be said and one may be lenient concerning it, despite the fact that it is da‘eef, because it is in accordance with the basic teachings of Islam and is not contrary to the texts of the Qur’an and Prophetic hadeeths. Moreover, it is specific to a situation as mentioned in the report, because this is one of the matters concerning which it is not permissible to make analogy, as beliefs are based on tawqeef [i.e., they can only be known through divine Revelation and sound texts of hadeeth, with no room for

ijtihad]. This is what we understand. (p. 56)

To sum up:

With regard to that which no one can do except Allah, and that which is unique to His Lordship, such as giving life, causing death, and granting provision… All of that is not to be sought from anyone except Him, may He be glorified. Whoever seeks help from anyone other than Allah with regard to such matters has committed shirk (association of others with Allah).

With regard to that which created beings are able to do, there is nothing wrong with asking for it from those who are able to do it, or seeking their help with regard to it, subject to two conditions: that the one whose help is sought is alive and present, and that he is able to do that thing.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 132642

And Allah knows best.